2 '51

A SERMON

Preach'd at S^t. MARYS Church
IN
CAMBRIDGE,

JANUARY the 6th. Being the FEAST
OF THE
EPIPHANY.

By *FRANCIS HARE*, A. M.
and Fellow of KING's College.

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Mr *Hare's* SERMON
On the *EPIPHANY.*

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LUKE II. xxxii.

A Light to lighten the Gentiles——

THE Hymn from whence theſe Words are taken, is ſo well known by being made a part of the conſtant Service of the Church, that I need not mention either the Author or Occaſion of them; Every body knows When they were ſpoken and by Whom, ſees Who it is they point to, and is before-hand with me in the application of them to the Day; Which the Church hath ſet apart to commemorate that great Myſtery, the Manifeſtation of the *Meſſiah* to the Gentiles, a Myſtery hid from Ages and Generations, but now made known in the Perſons of the Wiſe Men; who by the Leading of a Star came from the Eaſt to *Jeruſalem* to pay their homage to the New-born King: For they were the Firſt-fruits of the Gentiles; in Them was this Manifeſtation, not only ſignified and ſhadowed forth, but actually begun; ſo ſoon did the *Meſſiah* the Glory of *Iſrael* begin to be a Light to the Gentiles alſo.

This is a Day much to be remembred in it ſelf; and as 'tis the laſt of the Solemnity of this Seaſon, ſo is it the great Reaſon we remembred thoſe that went before it: For what if *Chriſt* were in the fulneſs of Time Born of a pure Virgin, what if he were Circumciſed the Eight day, and made obedient to the Law; what had theſe things been to us, or what Intereſt had we had in them, if He that was Born and Circumciſed, had not been Manifeſted to us?

If we have any Senſe of the Miſery the Gentile World had hitherto, and would have ſtill continued to lie under, if the *Meſſiah* had not been reveal'd at all; and the yet greater Evils they muſt have undergone, if he had been reveal'd in the manner the *Jews* expected; we ſhall ſee abundant Reaſon to celebrate this Day, and joyfully acknowledge the Goodneſs of God to us, in that Manifeſtation of His Son, which we now commemorate. And if a Senſe of being deliver'd from our Miſery, if a Senſe of having the greateſt Evils remov'd far from us, be ſufficient to excite Joy and Praiſe, and Thankſgiving in us; much more will our Rejoycing be increas'd, much greater will our Obligations be, when we conſider the Favours and Bleſſings we do or may enjoy, if it be not our own Fault, in the room of thoſe Evils, which we muſt have been otherwiſe expoſed to.

If the *Meſſiah* had not been revealed at all, the World would ſtill have lain in Sin, in Blindneſs and great Darkneſs, and had neither known God, nor been known by Him; they would have been ſtill wandring after their own Imaginations, and either not ſearched, or ſearch'd in vain for any real Happineſs; their Wiſdom muſt ſtill have ended in extreme Folly, and they at laſt forc'd to ſit down, after having tired themſelves in endleſs Mazes and Uncertainties, in profound Darkneſs, and in the Shadow of Death. Such would have been the wretched State of Man, had the *Meſſiah* never come, or which is all one, had never been revealed to us; for ſuch it was before He came, as I ſhall ſhew more at large by and by, and ſuch it ſtill is in thoſe parts of the Gentile World, where the Light of the Goſpel has never Shone.

But Worſe, much Worſe had our Condition been, if the *Meſſiah* had been revealed in the manner the *Jews* expected; then indeed He had been a Light to the Gentiles, but not to Lighten and Comfort, and give Life to; far from that, He would have been a Light Dreadful and Terrible, to Burn up and to Deſtroy the Nations of the Earth, as many as would not bow their Neck to the *Jewiſh* Yoke; which was now, in the fulneſs of Time to be laid on all People, and be, as they thought, Univerſally Submitted to: for they expected the *Meſſiah* ſhould be a Mighty Deliverer, a Glorious Conquerour, One that

ſhould lift up his Voice on High, that ſhould be Dreadful to the Kings of the Earth, and ſubdue all People to Himſelf. They expected a *Star ſhould ariſe out of Jacob, and a Sceptre out of Judah, that ſhould ſmite the Corners of Moab, and deſtroy all the Children of Seth.*

Theſe were the Expectations of the *Jews*; which had they been fulfilled, had the *Meſſiah* appeared, as they flattered themſelves He would; they indeed would have had great Reaſon to Rejoyce: for to ſee the Slavery they were under, for in truth their Subjection to the *Roman* Yoke was little better, to ſee that not only changed into a Glorious Liberty, but to have themſelves the Power of the World in their own Hands; to ſee all Nations and Kingdoms fall down before them; but above all, to have it now their turn to Rule over thoſe, who at preſent Ruled it over them; this would have been matter of great Joy to any People, tho' they had been more Conſiderable, had Suffered leſs, and had had a better Temper than the *Jews*. But how great ſoever their Joy would have been on this Occaſion, the reſt of the World would have had little Reaſon to join with them; their Portion would have been to Lament themſelves and their hard Fortune, their Sorrow would have riſe with the Calamities this State of Things would have reduced them to, and both would have increaſed in proportion to the Proſperity and Joy of this little People; who

who confined to a narrow Corner of the World, now made no Figure, were no Terrour to their Neighbours, but lived to themſelves, Deſpiſing and Deſpiſed.

But, Thanks be to God, this is not the Caſe; their Expectations are ſo far from being fulfilled, that the exact Reverſe of them is come to paſs. They are ſo far from being the only People whom the Lord hath Redeemed, ſo far from engroſſing the Bleſſings of the *Meſſiah* to themſelves, that they are almoſt the only Nation that has had no part in them: For *God hath given them the Spirit of Slumber, Eyes that they ſhould not ſee, and Ears that they ſhould not hear:* They ſtumbled, they fell, and *thro' their fall Salvation is come unto the Gentiles.* So great is *the Goodneſs and Severity of God; on them which fell, Severity; but Goodneſs towards us.* His Severity indeed is by no means matter of Joy to a Good Man; far be thoſe Thoughts from us, we ought rather to pity their great Unhappineſs, and pray for the Time when God will have Mercy on his Ancient People; but we ought to make this Uſe of it, it ſhould teach us to ſet a greater value on his Goodneſs, who have received ſuch undeſerved and unexpected Favours from Him, *When we were no People, when we ſought Him not, nor asked after Him;* and that not in common and together with them who were His People, and whoſe God He had

declared Himself to be; but what is much more surprizing, they had no Share in them; *The casting them away was the Reconciling of the World.*

That we may the better understand the Greatness of this Mercy, and have a due Sense of the Obligations it brings with it, I shall consider,

First, the State of the Gentile World before our Saviour came;

Next wherein the Enlightning it consisted; and

In the *Last* place make some Application of the Whole.

First, To consider the State of the Gentile World before our Saviour came, we find it frequently represented to us in the Scriptures under one Word, and that is Darkness; *To give Light to them that sit in Darkness; Ye were sometime Darkness, but now are ye Light in the Lord; who hath called you out of Darkness, into marvellous Light; We are not of the Night, nor of Darkness; Who hath delivered us from the power of Darkness*; with many more places of the like nature, in all which the Word *Darkness* is used to represent the Sad Condition the World was in, before the *Messiah* was Manifested to them: Sad indeed it was, if this be a just Name for it; For Darkness we have all a great

great and natural Averſion to, 'tis a State of Inactivity, deprives us of all the Uſe and Pleaſure of the Day, and is utterly unfit for Motion; we either cannot move, or cannot be ſure we move aright; 'tis a time fit only for the Beaſts and Men of Prey to move in; for we want the Benefit of the Nobleſt and moſt Uſeful Senſe we have, our Sight; without which the Reſt are of very little Uſe, either to keep us from the Dangers which we ſhould otherwiſe bring upon our ſelves, or to defend us from the Inſults and Injuries of others. In a word, there is nothing creates a greater, or more univerſal Fear, than long or unuſual Darkneſs; and nothing but Cuſtom, and the help of Artificial Light, reconciles us to what is uſual. What then can a State of Darkneſs mean leſs than a Wretched, Ignorant, Uncomfortable State; a State full of Confuſion and Error, of Corrupt Opinions, and Abominable Practices; a State Hideous and Ugly as the firſt Chaos, when the Earth was *without Form and Void, and Darkneſs was upon the Face of the Deep?*

Now that the State of the Gentile World before our Saviour came, was a State of Darkneſs, and deſervedly called by ſo Black a Name, muſt be owned by all who have ever look't into theſe Times, and conſidered the Particulars wherein this Darkneſs conſiſted; which, were they all put together, ſhould give

give us a juſt Conception of that Univerſal Night, which was then ſpread over the Intellectual World. The great Ignorance they were under, and the Conſequences of it, would give us ſuch a frightful Scene of things, as one can hardly tell how to Believe; or Believing, how to Reconcile it with the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of that Being, whoſe Eyes are always upon the Works of his hands, and who *from the Beginning Ruleth over All.* The firſt and great Fundamental Error they were in, was concerning the True God; their Notions were ſo contrary and inconſiſtent upon this Head, that one can't read them without deeply and frequently Reflecting, how Poor and Low a Thing the Mind of Man is, when he Attempts to comprehend Divine Truths. The World was divided into two Extremes; they were either for many Gods, or none at all; Opinions almoſt as remote from Truth, as from one another. The Oldeſt indeed, and always moſt Univerſal Opinion, and which perhaps aroſe from the Scattered and Corrupt Remains of ſome Ancient and Genuine Traditions, was that of many Gods: But this was ſo abſurd in it ſelf, and all it's Conſequences; their Number, Names, Actions, Offices, Worſhip and Sacrifices, were ſo very unaccountable, ſo impoſſible to be made Senſe of; that when the World grew more refined, the Men of Penetration and Thought, to mend the matter, betook themſelves to the oppoſite Extreme:

treme; and becauſe they could no where meet with a Rational Religion, vainly concluded that Reaſon and Religion were in their Natures inconſiſtent; they concluded no Religion could be True, becauſe all they had ſeen were certainly Falſe. For they were in almoſt every Country different at the ſame time, and in the ſame Country at different times: they worſhipped they knew not what nor why, they worſhipped Stocks and Stones, and under them Imaginary Beings infinitely above Humane Nature, together with others as much below it.

We have an Epitome of the groſſeſt and fouleſt Superſtition the World ever knew, in that one People the *Egyptians:* Nothing can be more ridiculous, than what the beſt Writers tell us of their Gods, and their Religious Rites; and in their Story we ſee in effect the Religions of other Nations. For *Egypt* was the great Nurſery of Superſtition; from thence aroſe that thick Darkneſs, which afterwards overſpread the Earth; not that this Darkneſs was every where uniformly ſpread; as ſoon as it began to be diffus'd, 'twas divided and broke into unequal parts, inſenſibly altered as it went along, and received different Additions, according to the ſeveral Climates to which it came. By which means their Religions by degrees differed more from one another, but not leſs from Reaſon than before. Sacred and Prophane were every

where arbitrary things, and ſometimes names directly oppoſite were given to the ſame thing by different Orders of Men in the ſame Country. There was nothing ſo abſurd which Superſtition could not lead them into a Belief of; and if one may judge of what they thought by what they did, one would think, the more abſurd a thing was, the more they liked it: otherwiſe one can't imagine how the World could have fall'n into ſo great a variety of Errors, ſo very groſs, with ſo ſmall a mixture of Truth in them; which, as it was very little, ſo very probably 'twas owing not to any right Reaſoning; for had they reaſoned about theſe things rightly, they muſt needs have found out more Truth, they could not have ſtopped ſo very ſhort, and have taken up with ſo few right Notions, ſo extremely diſguiſed with falſe ones. Theſe therefore 'tis likely were borrowed from ſome Traditions, which once were more perfect, but now were grown very old, and by length of time, and frequent Tranſplanting ſo altered and defaced, that the firſt Authors of them would ſcarce have known them; ſo little of the Genuine parts remained, and the old Strokes were in a manner all gone. Elſe how could things ſo incoherent be embraced, as there was in moſt of their Religions? how was it poſſible ſo many and ſo different Perſuaſions could be deductions from the ſame common Principles?

'Tis

'Tis hard to conceive how the Opinions of any one People, taken together, could proceed from any Principles at all: nor indeed did they; theſe Religions were then form'd when the World were children in Underſtanding; when they admired every thing, and underſtood nothing; nothing of Arts and Sciences, nothing of the Cauſes and Natures of things, in a word, nothing beyond their Senſes, and what was juſt before their Eyes; and by that means became an eaſie Prey to a few, who thought farther than the reſt, and uſed them as we uſe Children now; amuſed them with Fables and ſtrange Stories, and lead them which way they would, by complying with their Superſtition; to which purpoſe they took care the Doctrines they taught the People, ſhould be abſurd enough, and well adjuſted to the Lowneſs of their Underſtandings. This was really the caſe, and no better; for the Fabulous Age of the World was the time when theſe ſeveral Religions were firſt invented, and their Poets were the Authors of them; of which the Eldeſt either never wrote, or at leaſt nothing of their genuine Writings is now left: but of the Poets which do remain, we find always the oldeſt, as had in greateſt Veneration, ſo be ſure moſt abſurd in matters of Religion.

The World in the mean time was like to thrive and grow in Underſtanding, under the Influence of ſuch Teachers, and in embracing Schemes of

Religion formed in ſuch Times, Times of which we know nothing certainly beſides their Ignorance. Yet Conſiderations of State, Management of deſigniug Men, and the Intereſt that a great many had in them, kept theſe Superſtitions up in after-times; the bulk of the People being as ignorant as ever, and ſtill believing whatever they were taught. There were, no doubt, ſome wiſe and honeſt Men, who ſaw the Abſurdity of theſe things, and would have declaimed ſooner and more loudly againſt them, but were deterred, 'tis likely, from the Attempt, partly by the Danger they might bring upon themſelves, and partly thro' a very right Opinion they had, that Religion was neceſſary for Society; and that tho' the eſtabliſh't one were very faulty, there might be more inconvenience in labouring a Change; eſpecially ſince they could not be ſure what Religion was true, to bring in the room of it, or indeed whether any were ſo: beſides it may be they thought, that in that State of things Prejudices were neceſſary to make the People have any notion of Religion; and therefore if they were once removed, the People, who are always ready to run into extremes, and if once unhinged, are very hard to be ſettled again, if they had ſhaken off the Religion they were bred in, would then perhaps take up with none at all. Some ſuch Thoughts probably kept in the Wiſer Heathens from expoſing the Folly and Inconſiſtency of the Religions then in uſe, who could

could eaſily have framed more rational Schemes, but were not ſure they could find out the True one; and therefore were content to ſit down by thoſe they had, and make the beſt Senſe of them they could.

In time indeed they ventured, many of them, to refine a little, and by degrees endeavoured to explain away what was moſt apparently Abſurd; but this did not ſatisfie ſome, who being Men of more Heat and leſs Diſcretion, were for going faſter, and thinking they knew more than all before them, could not keep in the mighty Secret any longer. The Credulity, implicite Belief and Bigotry the World had been ſo long under, about things they had ſcarce any notion at all of, made them run now into the other Extreme; and ſo firſt *Scepticiſm* and then downright *Atheiſm* became the Learning and Wiſdom of the World. Theſe Men having found the World was miſtaken in many things, began now to doubt of every thing, they began to queſtion the Being of any God at all; and having ſhewn with Reaſon enough on their ſide the folly and weakneſs of the common Opinions, as they were then corrupted, 'twas ſo hard to ſee the little Truth that lay under them, that without Diſtinction they threw them all away; and ſetting up for themſelves, entertained about almoſt all things new Opinions of their own, very different from what had been hitherto received, but not leſs Extravagant. And thus by

different ways they came to all intents and purposes to the same end, and left the World in as ill a Condition as they found it, or rather made things worse; for perhaps 'tis better to act upon wrong Principles, than none at all; for then Men may be govern'd by those that are wiser than themselves, whereas the Men of no Principles can be govern'd neither by themselves nor others.

Some of the main Points about which the World, when they began to think freely, were employed, were these; First, They were much in the dark, whether there were such a thing as an Eternal Intelligent Being or not; if there were, wherein his Nature consisted, and what were his chief Attributes; and if there were one such Being, who was infinitely Wise and Good, whether there were not an Evil one Equal in Power to him; without which they could not account for the Origine of Evil, which was always one great Difficulty. Next, if there were One Eternal Mind, and but One, which we call God, whether he made the World or not; if he did, whether he only put things into that Frame and Order they are now in, or whether he made the things themselves out of Nothing; If the former, for the latter was an Opinion that all their Philosophy was not able to comprehend, whether this God were any other than the Soul of the World, animating the vast Mass of Matter, after the same manner as the Soul of Man

Man actuates his little World. Again, if God were a Being intirely distinct from the Universe, with which many of them confounded him, whether he did at all interest himself in the Government of the World, after he had made it; that is, whether there were any Providence or not, whether his Happiness did not consist in perpetual Ease and Rest, and consequently whether any Care or Thought of Business were not inconsistent with it; or if he did meddle and concern himself with the Government of Things, whether this Care were not confin'd within certain Bounds, in looking after the great Springs and Wheels of the Machine, while the Sublunary things and this lower World were quite neglected; or if he took care of them too, whether this extended to the Insensible and Vegetable part only, or to the Sensible and Rational; if to them, whether he governed the Minds and Actions of Men, or only their involuntary Motions; if their Minds and Thoughts and Actions, whether by a chain of Causes link'd together in a perpetual and necessary Order, or only by a Concurrence with their own free voluntary Motions; if the latter, whether Men were by that rendred capable of Moral Good and Moral Evil; if capable, whether they were actually accountable to God for what they do; which supposes that there are fixt and unalterable Rules of Good and Evil, that these Rules are the Will of God, that he has declared this Will of his to Man; if so, what

and

and how many are theſe Rules; when and where Revealed; are they all of Perpetual and Univerſal Obligation or not; if ſome only, which are they; what Puniſhments are annext to the Violation of them; when to be inflicted, in this Liſe or another; if in another, the Soul muſt be immortal and immaterial, and the Man muſt live again; beſides many other Difficulties, which muſt be determined, before we can know whether Man be actually accountable to GOD for what he does.

Theſe, all theſe are Queſtions of great Importance, and ſuch as the wiſeſt Heathens could come to no certain Concluſions about: Some of them indeed by an extraordinary Goodneſs of Mind have hit upon Noble Thoughts, and very much reſembling Truth; but when well examined, they appear to be, what themſelves could rather wiſh to be true, than be at all ſure they were ſo. I ſhall give but one Inſtance of this, and that is in that excellent Diſcourſe of *Socrates* before his Death; in which there are ſtrange and ſurprizing Strokes of Truth, about the Immortality of the Soul, and the Rewards and Puniſhments of another Life. Who can without pity ſee the weak Efforts of the beſt Reaſon? who can forbear wiſhing him Succeſs, or not be ſorry, extremely ſorry at his Diſappointment, who has ſuch noble Concluſions in view; but is utterly at a loſs, by what certain Steps to get at them? One ſees him through-

all along that piece, very earneſt in the ſearch after and purſuit of Truth; he ſometimes takes ſuch true Steps, and purſues ſo cloſely, that one can't help thinking every minute, the next will be the laſt, he ſeems ſo very near it; and then loſes his Scent a while, and then comes on again; which gives the Reader a very melancholy pleaſure, who can't but be in ſome ſort diſappointed himſelf, every time he ſees He is. The Diſcourſe thro'out muſt be own'd to be at firſt Sight very Beautiful; but if one view the Picture nicely, examine the ſeveral Parts of it, the Proportions and Reaſons on which they are built, the whole will appear ſuch a ſtrange mixture of Truth and Error, full of ſuch inconcluſive Arguments, ſo like Dreaming of ſome Fairy Land, that one can't but wonder how it could come from the Hand of ſo great a Maſter, or be thought a finiſht Piece by thoſe that heard it. In truth, under all the Good-will he diſcovers for ſo good a Cauſe, one can't but obſerve with how much Diffidence himſelf ſpeaks of it; much leſs can any body elſe be convinc'd by what he ſays, unleſs ſuch as come prepar'd to believe before they hear, and can take up with Concluſions firſt, and then look out for Premiſes, by which they may ſeem to others to have come to them.

So great was the Blindneſs and Ignorance the World was under about things of the greateſt moment; I might proceed to ſhew that their

Works alſo were Works of Darkneſs; that their Manners, generally ſpeaking, were as corrupt as their Opinions; but the cloſe Connexion there is between Religion and Morality makes this leſs neceſſary, nor have I time for it, if I would. How far this Corruption was inevitable and invincible, I will not now diſpute: Thus much is certain, the World either had no means to remove it, or at leaſt did not know how to uſe them, and conſequently would never have remov'd it, had not the *Meſſiah* in the fulneſs of Time been reveal'd to them. In Him *the People that walked in Darkneſs, have ſeen a great Light: they that dwell in the Land of the Shadow of Death, upon them hath the Light ſhined.* 'Twas He diſpell'd theſe clouds which had ſo long hung over the Earth; He enlightned the World after this long and univerſal Dark, this black eternal Night.

II. Wherein this Enlightning the World conſiſted, was the Second thing I propos'd to ſpeak to; which I ſhall do very briefly.

It conſiſted then in introducing a new State of things, a State in all its parts oppoſite to that I have been deſcribing; in teaching the World all That is neceſſary for them to know of Divine things, of the Nature of GOD, and of Themſelves; in giving us juſt and true Notions of the Divine Providence, of his Wiſdom and Goodneſs

neſs in governing the World; in laying down excellent Rules of Living well, and teaching us the true nature of Moral Good and Evil; and laſtly, in giving us a reaſonable Worſhip, worthy of Man, and in ſome ſort worthy his Creator.

Now the World is no longer at a loſs to know what God is, what he Requires of us, and how he will be Served; now we have a certain Meaſure of our Duty, we have fixt unalterable Rules to go by; we depend now no longer on our own Reaſon, or the Authority of others; we are directed by the higheſt Reaſon of the beſt Being, by the divine and infallible Guidance of the Son of God. Before, the World muſt either have follow'd the Dictates of ſome great Law-giver, or found out the Rules of their Duty for themſelves. As to the former, no Man ever had or could have an Authority to preſcribe to the reſt of the World, nor was it ſafe he ſhould, as appears from the great Imperfections, that are to be met with in the beſt *Syſtemes* of Human Laws: nor could they find out the Meaſure of their Duty themſelves; for that requires vaſt Abilities, capable of drawing a very long Chain of Conſequences from a very few Principles; and therefore, if poſſible, yet is it what much the greateſt part of Mankind have neither Capacity nor Opportunity for.

But this is but a part only of what our Saviour has done for us; to all this he has added great and precious Promiſes, to invite us to our Duty, and

proportionable Threats to deter us from the contrary: and that nothing might be wanting to compleat this great Redemption he hath wrought for us, that no one might complain he had not all due Aſſiſtance to enable him to do what is required of him, he hath graciouſly promiſed his holy Spirit to all them that call upon him.

O! how thankful ought we all to be for this great Goodneſs of GOD to us, how careful not to undervalue it, as ſome do, who by a ſtrange Ingratitude, becauſe GOD hath ſuffered them to enjoy the Light, conclude there was no Darkneſs, and that the World would have been ſufficiently enlightned, tho' GOD had done nothing of all this for them. They deny the Neceſſity of Revelation, and bring down the Sublime Perfection of the Chriſtian Religion to that which they call Natural: They can now prove to you from that all the Truths delivered in the Goſpel, and argue againſt Revealed Religion, from that very Light it furniſhes them with: And ſo in truth beg the Queſtion, while to prove they don't ſtand in need of Revelation, they produce as the Effect of their own unaſſiſted Reaſon what was really borrow'd from it. They diſtinguiſh not between Reaſon with, and without the helps the Scriptures give it; which yet are very different things, as different as it is to find out a thing, and aſſent to it when it is found out: a Man may as well ſay, he can move as

as regularly in the Dark as in the Light, becauſe he hath in both the Faculty of Moving; as pretend he could reaſon as well without the Goſpel, as he can under it, becauſe he would have the Faculty of Reaſoning then as well as now. Could theſe Men poſſibly efface the early Notices they receiv'd from Revelation, they would ſoon think more meanly of themſelves, and ſee how ſmall Advances we ſhould make, if GOD in his Diſpleaſure had ſtill left us to our ſelves: or, if either their great Opinion of themſelves, or the real Difficulty of the thing hinder them from judging of the Strength, or rather Weakneſs of their own Reaſon, in caſe it were diveſted of the helps they have from Revelation, a little Learning will ſerve the turn: let them look back into the firſt Hiſtories of the earlieſt Times, let them read the beſt Diſcourſes of the ableſt Men, Men no way inferiour to them in Natural Abilities, Men of greater Induſtry, cloſer Thought and more Virtue; and then they will be eaſily convinc'd, unleſs they are reſolved not to ſee, how few Concluſions we are able to come to of our ſelves about Divine Matters, about GOD, Religion, Liberty, Morality, a future Judgment and Immortality.

There is great reaſon to think theſe Men contend for Natural Religion, not for its own ſake, but to pull down that which is revealed; and were that once done, they would deal eaſily enough with this, and ſo get to their beloved

Concluſion, That there is no Religion at all: They would then be very ingenious in ſhewing the Faults and Imperfections of what they now ſo much cry up, and would with Triumph prove, That they who have thrown off Revealed Religion, cannot reaſonably adhere to it; ſince the Difficulties againſt one, many of them at leaſt, lie equally againſt the other, if one be abſurd and too hard to be believed, ſo is the other, and no one, who can take up with the Principles of Natural Religion, can find it difficult to embrace the Chriſtian.

But we have not ſo learned *Chriſt*, we ſee and know the great Things he hath done for us, that he is the true Light, and that the World was in Darkneſs before he came: He is the great Reſtorer and Deliverer of Mankind from that Blindneſs and Ignorance the Degeneracy of their Nature had brought them under; 'twas He that formed anew, as it were, this Part of the Creation, and gave again to Man an underſtanding Heart; He ſtampt again upon him the Image of his Maker, that Image, on which the Dominion of Man over the reſt of the Creation was at firſt founded: which Preheminence before 'twas hard to ſee a reaſon for, he differed ſo very little from the Beaſts that periſh, but now hath God exalted him for ever, he hath once more made him a little lower than the Angels, he hath crowned him with Honour and Immortality, which

which is again brought to light by the Goſpel of his Son. *This is the Lord's doing, and is marvellous in our Eyes;* for this ſhould every Mouth be full of Thankſgiving, and every Tongue tell forth his Praiſe. 'Tis as impoſſible to have a Senſe of theſe Favours, and not be thankful for them, as 'tis for thoſe to be thankful, who have no Senſe of them.

But this is not all, 'tis not enough to thank God on this wiſe: The Natural Conſequence of what he has done for us, is to deny Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, to have no Fellowſhip with the Unfruitful Works of Darkneſs, but to walk as Children of the Light and of the Day. The times of Darkneſs were times of Ignorance, and therefore God winked at them; but now ſince the Light of the Goſpel is ſhed abroad, he commands all Men every where to repent. Our Duty riſes in proportion to the Means God has furniſhed us with for the Performance of it; this every body is ſenſible of, this makes wicked Men ſo naturally plead Ignorance, this makes Men ſhut their Eyes ſo hard againſt the Light of the Goſpel, as being conſcious they are without excuſe, if the Light really ſhines upon them, and they ſee it does ſo, and yet ſtill work the Works of Darkneſs. Now if this be ſo, if our Duty increaſes as the Light does that is given us to work by, then are they under the greateſt Obligations, who enjoy moſt of this Light: And there-

therefore as the *Jewiſh* Diſpenſation obliged them to a greater Perfection and Holineſs than what the Heathen World knew, ſo does *Chriſtianity* obliges us to a greater than either. We are taught that *except our Righteouſneſs exceed the Righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, we ſhall in no caſe enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

By the ſame Argument a greater Degree of Piety, Charity, and other Virtues will be required of ſome parts of the Chriſtian World above others, in as much as they enjoy greater Light, purer and leſs corrupted by Superſtition, Ignorance, and the remains of ancient Heatheniſm. This is the caſe of the Reformed Churches, in compariſon not only of the *Roman*, but of any other Chriſtian Church now in being: And if all the Reformed Churches enjoy not an equal Light, we have no reaſon to think any of them on this account more happy than our own. And indeed we are apt enough to own this, and pleaſe our ſelves with the thoughts of being of ſo pure a Church, where we have the Word of God conſtantly read and preached to us, frequent Sacraments, and daily Prayers: We are bred up to a rational and intelligible Devotion, we want neither the Subſtance nor Form of Godlineſs, we are taught to ſerve God with the pureſt Worſhip, and in the moſt decent Manner. But 'tis ſtrange to ſee Men cry up this Church,

and

and value themſelves for being Members of it, and yet not ſee at the ſame time, how much more they have on this account to anſwer for; how by this means the great Plea of not knowing or not being taught their Duty is wholy taken from them.

But I muſt not ſtop here; the Gradation from Heatheniſm to Judaiſm, and from thence to Chriſtianity in general, then to the Reformed parts of it, and laſt of all to our own Church, this Gradation muſt ſtill be carried one ſtep higher, from our Church to the Eyes of it the Univerſities. Here we meet with greater, much greater means of knowing and doing our Duty, than any other Place any where affords. And who does not ſee the Conſequence of this? were a Man who had never ſeen or heard of ſuch a Place as this before, for the firſt time made acquainted with the Inſtitution and Deſign of it, the Laws we are governed by, the Care and Diſcipline and Method of inſtruction, and laſtly the great and good Examples we live under; how would he long after the Original of ſo fair a Picture, how deſirous would he be to ſee this Beauty of our Earth? He would expect Learning to run down among us like a Stream, and Righteouſneſs like a Flood; he would expect to meet every where with bright and ſhining Inſtances of Piety and Holineſs, of Induſtry and Temperance, of Charity, Patience and Humility; in ſhort; ſomething far beyond the Improvements the reſt of the World are capable of.

But I need not ſuppoſe what Thoughts a Man would have, who never ſaw any thing of a Univerſity beyond the Scheme and Model of it; we are pretty well convinced, that this is what the World expects of us: for if they did not look for ſomething very perfect, they would think our Imperfections a great deal leſs, than we find they are apt to do. Which ſhould be an additional Argument to us to walk worthy of the Light we have; for our Light is not like the Pillar that led the *Iſraelites* of old, a Light to them it was to guide, and Dark to all beſides; as we have this Light, ſo every body ſees we have it, and from thence are ready to take all advantages againſt us. I think we may without great Partiality to our ſelves ſay, We are not fairly dealt with in this matter; Envy and Ill-nature and a Spirit of Phanaticiſm, both as to the Civil and Religious State, have certainly a great ſhare in the loud Complaints againſt us; and they that rail at us for being no better, are many of them really ſorry, we are no worſe. Men who deſign to deſtroy all Principles of Religion and Government, can't with patience ſee thoſe Places flouriſh, which are ſo directly oppoſite to ſuch Deſigns, whoſe very End is to inſtill true Notions of theſe things, and root out all deſtructive Opinions whatſoever. Which makes *Atheiſts* and *Deiſts* neceſſarily Enemies to our very Conſtitution, for Theſe are the Banks that keep out their pernicious Doctrines from breaking in upon the Nation. Not that theſe are all the Enemies we have;

have; a little Truth mixed with a great deal of Calumny, has made our Faults appear much greater than they are; by which means other and better Men have been unhappily influenced to the Prejudice of these Places.

But how unjust soever these Complaints are, we may make a right use of them, by mending what ever is amiss, by walking more circumspectly, and giving no Occasion to the Adversary. 'Tis the Fate of Persons and Places that are Eminent; the more they are so, the more they are expos'd to publick View, and consequently Censure; for many, a great many take a View of them, not to admire their Beauty or Excellency, but to find some Fault with them, and then are most disappointed when they find fewest. And as this is generally one of the Disadvantages of a high Station, so it is in a peculiar manner, and for particular reasons, the Fortune or rather Fate of those Illustrious Bodies the Universities.

But to return from this Digression, which a just Sense of the Light we live under, the Obligations it laies on us, and the Restlessness of our Enemies has led me to; where much is given, much is required, and in return of great Favours, great Duties become due from us; and if we would be the better for the Light that is come into the World, we must endeavour to deserve it; we can have no benefit in the bright Shining of the Gospel, unless we renounce the hidden Plea-

Pleaſures of the Night. God did not give us this Light to glory in our Shame, and ſhew that we can be wicked ſtill, that we can abuſe his Grace, and dare produce thoſe Monſters into open Day, which before were ſhrowded under the cover of the Dark. No, what was then excuſable, is now no longer ſo; to prefer the abſurd Pleaſures of Sin before the Beauty and Comelineſs of Virtue, when our Eyes are open, and in the day, this is very unnatural and unpardonable, this proves we want common Senſe as well as common Gratitude, this can't but be highly provoking to Almighty God, who beſtow'd theſe Favours on us to quite other Purpoſes. Let us not therefore any longer diſtinguiſh our time as Chriſtians into Light and Darkneſs, and think we have the night ſtill left to revel in: the Darkneſs now will not cover us, *the Darkneſs is no Darkneſs to us, the Light is as clear as the Day, the Darkneſs and Light to us are both alike.* For ſince the Sun of Righteouſneſs is riſen, ſince He that was in the beginning Light, Eternal Light, is come down among us and become the Light of Men; to this new State agrees the Deſcription St. *John* gives us of the New *Jeruſalem*, with which I ſhall conclude. *The City had no need of the Sun, neither of the Moon to ſhine in it; for the Glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof.*

THE END.

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